

SHADE FURNACE
Rockingham vicinity
Somerset County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-374

HAER
PA
56-ROCK.V
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SHADE FURNACE
HAER No. PA-374

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Location: North of Rockingham, Shade Township,
Somerset County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1807

Present Owner: Historical and Genealogical Society of
Somerset County

Present Use: Interpretive Site

Significance: Constructed in 1807 by Gearhart and
Reynolds, Shade Furnace was Somerset
County's first iron furnace. While the
iron industry in the county never grew
in importance, as this industry did in
neighboring Cambria County, Shade
Furnace was the county's longest
operating iron furnace, closing in 1858.

Historian: Scott C. Brown, 1992.

Project Information: The results of the study of Somerset
County were published in 1994: Gray
Fitzsimons, Ken Rose, and Patricia
Summers (eds), Somerset County,
Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic
Engineering and Industrial Sites
(Washington, D.C.: National Park
Service). The contents of the
publication were transmitted to the
Library of Congress as individual
reports. Research notes, field photos
and copies of historic photos collected
during the project were transmitted to
the AIHP Collection, Special
Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana
University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA
15705.

DESCRIPTION: Shade Furnace, presently owned by the Historical and Genealogical Society of Somerset County, is constructed of dry laid stone. The top of the structure, which originally stood 30' high, is somewhat deteriorated. The 8' high tuyere arch faces to the west. The race from Dark Shade Creek is still visible, as is the water wheel pit on the west side of the furnace. Remains of several stone foundations exist in the nearby woods as well as iron ore pits. The top of the dry-laid stone furnace is deteriorated. The race is still somewhat visible.

HISTORY: Constructed by Gearhart and Reynolds, Shade Furnace was operated by the Shade Furnace Company and was the first furnace in Somerset County. It was in operation from 1807 until 1858. The site once included a foundry, a grist mill (built by the Shade Furnace Company in 1822), a blacksmith shop, a casting house, and a forge that manufactured stoves and cookware out of the furnace iron. This forge was located north of the furnace. The site provided all the necessary ingredients for the production of iron. Iron ore was abundant on the hillsides, the woods provided ample charcoal, Dark Shade Creek was a reliable nearby source of water, and ample limestone was available for flux. However, the site was relatively isolated and lacked a reliable transportation system. Pig-iron production at the furnace was twenty-five tons in 1838 and in 1855, three years before it closed, the facility produced as much as 400 tons. The property surrounding the furnace was gradually sold off, but the five acres that included the furnace were donated to the Historical and Genealogical Society of Somerset County.

Sources:

Baldwin, Leroy N. Two Hundred Years in Shade Township, Somerset County, Pennsylvania: 1762-1962.

Cassady, John C. The Somerset County Outline. Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1932.

Lesley, J.P. The Iron Manufacturer's Guide to the Furnaces, Forges, and Rolling Mills of the United States. New York: John Wiley, 1859.

"Shade Furnace in Operation in 1809," Laurel Messenger, May 1965.

Sharp, Myron B. and William H. Thomas. A Guide to the Old Blast Furnaces in Western Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1966.